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Lesson Plan

Book Group Boogie

A Lesson Plan with Immigration Literature Circles

AGE/GRADE: 4th/5th

TIME: approximately 55 minutes

BACKGROUND: This class has been studying immigration since the beginning of the school year. They have read immigration novels as a class read-aloud and as silent reading. They have visited the Tenement Museum on two occasions to learn more about life in early 20th century immigrant housing in New York City. The students have also created protest posters in reference to the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire. Each student has interviewed one immigrant and has completed a family tree, noting immigrants in their own families.

The next leg of this class' immigration journey is book groups. Students have recently been assigned book groups to learn how to analyze and discuss a text in analytical, critical, and creative ways as a collective. Students are learning to think deeply about what they are reading, engaging in rich discussions and debates. At this point, each student has read approximately the first 30 pages of his/her assigned novel. Adequate time in class has been given for students to complete their weekly reading. Book groups meet once per week. This is the first week the groups have met to discuss their novels. They fill out a Reader's Record (attached) before every book group session.

OBJECTIVE: To have students think deeply about the main character of their assigned novels and the ordeals their character is facing.

GOALS:

1. Small group and processing: Students will demonstrate their knowledge of character traits by filling in an outline of the main character of their story as a book group.
2. Large group: Students will practice their visual presentation skills by sharing a tableau of the story they are reading with their classmates.
3. Large group: Students will practice their audio presentation skills through thought tracking and sharing questions/comments with their classmates.
4. Processing: Students will think critically about the texts they are reading by extracting a scene/event in the story and presenting it to their classmates.
5. Individual and literacy: Students will practice their individual writing and critical thinking skills by using their writing notebooks to discuss what their group presented, how they think their character feels during the scene/event, or what they think their character will do next.

MATERIALS:

- Chart paper with character outline of Dina
- Six papers (one for each group) with a character outline, space for character's name, space for book title, space for book group name, space for date
- White board (for writing directions and captions) and markers
- Markers or colored pencils for each book group
- Writing notebooks and pencils

PROCEDURE:

1. Have the class sit in the meeting area. Tell them they are going to discuss a character in the book they are reading in their book group and then create a tableau for the class to share what they are reading. That way, maybe they will get interested in reading another book or decide that a particular book is not for them. (1 minute)
2. Tell the class their first step in their group is to discuss a major character in the story they are reading. Do an example with Dina from House of Tailors. Using a piece of chart paper, draw an outline of Dina and have the class fill in "character traits." (What is a character trait? How can you find out character traits?) (5 minutes)
3. Tell the class they are going to do this on their own in their book groups. Dismiss the groups to tables. Remind them that on the outline of their character, they need to write all of the "character traits" they can think of. (3 minutes)
4. Regain the attention of the class. Tell the class they will now create a tableau of an important scene or event in the story that involves their character and shows off one or more of their traits. Have them brainstorm a "caption" that will go underneath the picture. (What is a caption?) Have the class read the steps to a good tableau. Remind the class they are to choose an important scene or event in the story that involves their character and to come up with a caption for it. (7 minutes)
5. Once the class is prepared with their tableaus, tell them they get to take it one step further. Whenever they do anything, they are thinking. Even if they are being silent, they are thinking. What would your character be thinking in this picture? Give an example: have one student throwing a ball to another student. Freeze them. Ask them what they are thinking in that moment. Then ask the class for other suggestions of what they could be thinking. (3 minutes)
6. Ask the class to go back in their groups and brainstorm what each of them would be thinking in their tableau, even if they aren't playing a person. What might a table be thinking if there was tons of food on it? What would a boat be thinking if it was journeying for four months? Remind the students to use their imaginations. (2 minutes)
7. Have the class meet in the meeting area. Each group will present their tableau with:
 - a. Their "caption"
 - b. Three traits about their main character
 - c. "3, 2, 1, picture!" said by the class
 - d. Tell them when you tap their shoulder, they must stay frozen in the tableau and tell the class what they were thinking at that moment. (18-24 minutes--- 3-4 minutes each)
8. After each tableau, have the class discuss what they saw. Take questions/comments from the audience. Extra Questions: What did they learn about the main character? Do they want to read the story? Why/why not? What predictions can they make from the tableau? What questions do they have about the book? (12 minutes--- approx. 2 minutes each)

ASSESSMENT:

- Get feedback from the class about the activities. Ask: What did you learn from this process? What was easy/challenging? If we did this again, what would you change? What would you keep the same? (2-5 minutes depending on time...ALTERNATIVE: have students write about their experience in their writing notebooks for the evening's homework)
- Read writing notebook responses the day after the activity. Follow up with students and respond to their writing.

HOMEWORK (optional):

Write the following on the board (choose two or three to put on the board—don't overwhelm them!!!)---

Choose one:

1. Write at least one paragraph about your experience with one of the activities we did today. What did you like most/like least? What was challenging/easy? What would you have done differently? What did you do well? What did you learn?
2. Write at least one paragraph about your character's feelings. How do you think your character feels at this point in the story? Why?
3. Write at least one paragraph about your predictions for the story. What do you think your character will do next? What do you think will happen? How will your character change? How will your character stay the same?
4. Write at least one paragraph about one of your character's traits. What is the trait? How does it help them? How does it hurt them? How do other characters view that trait? What else does this trait reveal about your character?
5. Write at least one paragraph comparing your character to that of Dina (from House of Tailors) or Nory (from Nory Ryan's Song). How are your characters similar? How are they different?

IDEAS FOR EXPANSION:

Have students:

- complete character trait charts for other characters in the novels they are reading
- work on tableaux in their book groups
- activate their tableaux
- create storyboards of important events/scenes in their novels
- compare characters in other book groups
- compare characters of other immigration novels they have read in class
- compare themselves with a character in their novels
- match character traits of other characters in other book groups using a web
- create family trees for the characters in their stories
- write scripts for important scenes/events
- write about a typical day-in-the-life of their character
- complete "what ifs" –what if your character lived today? What if you met your character? What if your character was in this class? What if your character made a different choice? Etc. (frame these with individual students)